MIGRANT CHILD HEALTH

A Curriculum on the Role of Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors

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FOREWORD

Any health care providers who have ever worked with migrant and seasonal farmworker children have stories to tell about the shocking conditions they have witnessed among their patients. They probably have heart warming stories about action—beyond the scope of normal duty—undertaken on behalf of patients who are beyond the reach of mainstream health care delivery. Some of these stories are about successes, some are about tragic failures, and all have a familiar ring to others who have worked with farmworkers.

However, in spite of the similarities in the stories told about farmworker children, stories are not scientific evidence of the health status of this vulnerable population. They are anecdotal reports that make a good human interest story, but are just that: Stories. Anecdotal reports are not considered valid as the basis for policy changes, government intervention, or program funding. Such changes are based on research, and research is exactly what has been lacking from migrant health. The inability to provide scientific documentation of what health care providers and advocates across the nation know to be true for farmworkers and their children is one of the greatest frustrations of being a migrant health practitioner.

The majority of research conducted on farmworkers consists of small scale projects that are local in nature. They are often based on records from an area health center. Comparison of such studies from different locations around the nation yield consistent results. However, small sample sizes, differences in research approaches, and other variables can cause the veracity of the studies and the validity of comparisons to be called into question. The lack of definitive research on migrant and seasonal farmworkers underscores the need for greater awareness and understanding of the challenges that compromise the health of this vulnerable population.

The curriculum you hold in your hands was designed as a guide to foster awareness of the circumstances that affect farmworker health. It was developed as an educational tool for future as well as current health care providers, policy makers and advocates. A companion piece, entitled *Migrant Child Health: The Role of Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors* illustrates the need for health care providers and advocates to take up the cause of farmworker children.

David R. Smith MD

David Smith, MD
Commissioner
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CURRICULUM

Focus and General Instructions for Lecture Preparation

Migrant farmworkers and their families are comprised of multiple minority ethnic groups whose invisibility and social and political powerlessness have stifled research and action in health. The focus of this presentation is to develop an understanding of the social, demographic, and health-related environment of migrant farmworkers and their families. This will serve as a guide to appropriate health system design, redajustment, and tailoring of specific health interventions which are culturally based and sensitive to overcoming barriers to health care.

In order to provide systematic access to the literature on migrant health, readings will be based on published journal articles. However, due to the limited number of published and recent selections, supplemental papers and reports will be referenced along with information on where to obtain them.

All presentations on migrant health should feature basic sociodemographics and health status indicators, to be interpreted within a broader social and economic perspective. Subsequent materials and content areas may be fine-tuned and adapted to the particular knowledge level and needs of the classroom or group. For example, a medical school audience may be interested in the disease profiles of migrant farmworkers and cultural aspects of enhancing provider-patient communication to more effectively identify and treat medical problems. An environmental health audience may want an exclusive examination of pesticide-related health problems, while a health policy group may concentrate on health system organization and access barriers to health care. In order to accomodate divergent needs, the list of references within a particular focal area will be extensive, thereby allowing individual presenters to pick and choose materials that they deem particularly relevant to the needs of their audience.

Topical Areas, Readings and Discussion Questions

I. Migrant Labor in the United States: The Basics

A brief historical look at migrant labor in the U.S., including changing employment trends and the ethnic and racial composition of migrant farmworkers and their families. This is followed by a description of the three main migratory streams, in-

cluding size, work differentiation, and sociodemographic composition.

Reading

W.G. Vause, "Profile of the Migrant Farm Labor Force, In: The Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act," *Stetson Law Review* XI, no. 2 (1982):186-198.

V. Wilk, "Farmworker Demographics," In: V. Wilk, *The Occupational Health of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States.* (Washington, DC: Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc., 1986), pp.11-12.*

R.T. Trotter, II, " Migrant Lifestyles," In: *Orientation to Multicultural Health Care in Migrant Health Programs* (Austin, TX: National Migrant Resouce Program, Inc., 1988), pp. 19-28.**

Possible Discussion Questions

- How does the definition of "migrant" affect basic information gathered on this population and understanding of the migrant position within the broader categories of seasonal farmworkers, hired farmworkers, or agricultural workers?

- How have the labor market and immigration policies affected the size and composition of the migrant farmworker population over time?

- How do migrant farmworkers compare with other poverty groups or population subgroups in low wage jobs with regard to family income, family structure, family size, and educational attainment?

II. Migrant Health Profile

This section will include a presentation of health status indicators as compared with other sub-groups of the population. The study design and migrant sample selection will be highlighted in comparing the outcomes across studies. The burden of disease will illustrate the clinical skills needed to treat migrant patients effectively. However, the broader picture of social and cutural interactions in disease production, prevention, and treatment are of paramount importance in promoting improved health for the farmworker population.

Reading

G.S. Rust, "Health Status of Migrant Farmworkers: A Literature Review and Commentary," *American Journal of Public Health* 80, no. 10 (1990):1213-1217.

C. Sakala, "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States: A Review of Health Hazards, Status and Policy," *International Migration Review* XXI, no. 3 (1989):659-687.

V. Wilk, "A Review of Recent Data on the Health Status of Farmworkers," In: V. Wilk, *The Occupational Health of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States.* (Washington, DC: Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc., 1986), pp. 13-39. (The entire document is further divided into types of health problems which can supplement the initial reading).

G.E.A. Dever, "Migrant Health Status: Profile of a Population with Complex Health Problems," In: *Migrant Clinicians Network Monograph Series.* (Austin, Texas: National Migrant Resource Program, Inc.).**

Possible Discussion Questions

- What are the major health problems of migrant farmworkers in the U.S.?
- How do the health problems of migrants compare to non-migrants of the same ethnic/racial group, and to other poverty subgroups in the population?
- What are the unique work-related problems of migrant farmworkers?
- What are the society level macro factors and household level social factors that contribute to different health outcomes of migrant farmworkers?
- How do the data limitations affect our understanding of disease patterns and their precursors?

III. Migrant Child Health: Risk and Opportunity

This section will focus on the health profile of the most vulnerable subgroup of migrants, namely migrant children. Their unique health problems will be highlighted, along with social, demographic, and environmental risk factors.

Reading

D.P. Slesinger, B.A. Christensen, and E. Cautley, "Health and Mortality of Migrant Farm Children," *Social Science and Medicine* 23, no. 1 (1986):65-74.

J. Ruducha, *Migrant Child Health: The Role of Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors.* (Austin, TX: National Migrant Resource Program, Inc., 1994)**

H.P. Chase, V. Kumar, J..M. Dodds, H.E. Sauberlich, R.M.. Hunter, R.S. Burton and V. Spalding, "Nutritional Status of Preschool Mexican-American Migrant Farm Children," *Am J Dis Child* 122 (1971):316-324.

O.W. Larson, J. Doris and W.F. Alvarez, "Child Maltreatment Among East Coast Migrant Farmworkers," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 11 (1987):281-291.

Possible Discussion Questions

- What are the major child health problems and their precursors?
- How does the health profile of migrant children compare with non-migrant children of the same ethnic/racial origin?
- What are the cultural and micro-level social influences affecting migrant child health??
- How does access to health and social services affect health status?

IV. The Toxic Workplace: Occupational Health Policies and Outcomes

Migrant farmworkers and their families are exposed to a toxic chemical and physical environment, leading to multiple health hazards. Numerous laws and regulations have been enacted to address some hazards, but their effect is limited. The exploration of these complex issues is essential as creative new solutions are proposed to meet a general growing awareness of environmental health effects of chemical food production that affect everyone in the food chain.

Reading

A.M. Hibschweiler, "The Toxic Workplace of the Child Farmworker," *Buffalo Law Review* 32 (1983):343-372.

F.P. Rivera, "Fatal and Non-Fatal Farm Injuries to Children and Adolescents in the United States," *Pediatrics* 76 (October 1985):567-573.

V. Wilk, "Maternal and Child Health Hazards," In: V. Wilk, *The Occupational Health of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States.* (Washington, DC: Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc., 1986), pp. 98-101.

A.L. Morse, "The Impact of Federal Legislation on Migrant Farmworkers," *Suffolk University Law Review* 12 (1978):836-.

E.S. Greenstone, "Farmworkers in Jeopardy: OSHA, EPA, and the Pesticide Hazard," *Ecology Law Quarterly* 5, no. 69 (1975):69-121. M.J. Coye, "The Health Effects of Agricultural Production: The Health of Agricultural Workers," *Journal of Public Health Policy* (September, 1985):349-370.

M. Moses, "Pesticide-Related Health Problems and Farmworkers," 37, no. 3 (1989):115-130.

M. Moses, "Farm Workers and Pesticides," In: R.D. Bullard, ed., *Confronting Environmental Racism.* (South End Press, 1992).

Possible Discussion Questions

- What are the occupational health problems experienced by migrant farmworkers and their families?

- What are the etiliogic orgins of occupational health problems?

- How does federal legislation impact the production and distribution of occupational health problems among migrant farmworkers and migrant children?

- What are the limitations in our knowledge about occupational health impacts and research needs to address those gaps?

V. Health System Performance: Issues of Access and Cultural Acceptability

Appropriate and equitable use of health services can subtantially mediate the effect of broader social, economic and environmental insults to positive health. Available research on utilization patterns of migrant farmworkers and their families over time will enhance our understanding about barriers to health care imposed by the structure, financing and organization of health services. Cultural heterogeneity in health services utilization highlights the need for a deeper understanding of health beliefs, and attitudes toward medical and health care providers which are manifested in individual action and health care seeking behavior.

Reading

American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Community Health Services, "Health Care for Children of Migrant Families," *Pediatrics* 84, no. 4 (1989):1989.

D. Slesinger and E. Cautley, "Medical Utilization Patterns of Hispanic Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin," *Public Health Reports* 96, no. 3 (1981):255-263.

P.S.K. Chi, "Health Care and Health Status of Migrant Farmworkers in New York State," *Migration Today* 13, no. 1 (1985):39-44.

P.S.K. Chi, "Medical Utilization Patterns of Migrant Farm Workers in Wayne County, New York," *Public Health Reports* 100, no. 5 (1985):480-490.

P.R. Bleiweis, R.C. Reynolds, L.D. Cohen and N.A. Butler, "Health Care Characteristics of Migrant Agricultural Workers in Three North Florida Counties," *Journal of Community Health* no.1 (1977).

R.T. Trotter, II, *Orientation to Multicultural Health Care in Migrant Health Programs* (Austin, TX: National Migrant Resouce Program, Inc., 1988).

M.A. Mendelson, J. Plews-Ogan, and J.A. Johnson, "Utilization of a Migrant Outreach Nursing Service," *The Journal of Rural Health* 2, no. 2 (1986):37-45.

W..W. Anderson, and R.L. Kane, "Patterns of Care Given Migrant Workers in Utah by Private Physicians and Clinics," *Public Health Reports* 92, no. 4 (1977):326-331.

National Advisory Council on Migrant Health, "Health Reform," 1993 Recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Migrant Health (Austin, TX: National Migrant Resource Program, Inc., 1993), pp. 45-50.**

National Advisory Council on Migrant Health, "Outreach," 1993 Recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Migrant Health (Austin, TX: National Migrant Resource Program, Inc., 1993), pp. 53-59.

Possible Discusssion Questions

- What are the health services utilization patterns of migrant farmworkers and their families?
- What are the social, cultural, economic, and health system factors that affect access and utilization of health care services?
- How can health services be better organized to remove occupational, social, and cultural barriers to health care for migrant farmworkers?
- What are the similar findings as well as inconsistencies among various studies?
- Do issues of access for migrant farmworkers remain constant over time or do they change in different decades?

VI. Improving Migrant Health: Beyond the Politics of Social and Health Policy

The broader political, social, and economic milieu affects the development and enactment of policies which affect migrant farmworkers as well as other populations in society. An understanding of this broader framework will lead to a grounding of current policy agenda translating into specific types of programs for migrant farmworkers.

Reading

S.E. Barnett, J. Gillespie and R.L. Call, "Migrant Health Revisited: A Model for Statewide Health Planning and Services," *American Journal of Public Health* 70, no. 10 (1980):1092-1094.

B. Shenkin, *Health Care for Migrant Workers: Policies and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1974).

U.S. General Accounting Office, *Problems in the Structure and Management of the Migrant Health Program* (Gaithersburg, MD: US General Accounting Office, 1981).***

Possible Discussion Questions

- What is the social, political, and economic environment for a migrant health agenda?

- What strategies have been proven successful and not so successful in promoting migrant health, including the securing of additional financial resources?

Where to Obtain Reports

* National Rural Health Care Association (NRHCA), 301 E. Armour Blvd., Suite 420, Kansas City, MO 64111.

** National Migrant Resource Program, Inc., 1515 Capital of Texas Highway, South, Suite 220, Austin, TX 78746.

*** U.S. General Accounting Office, Document Handling and Information Services Facility, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD., 20760.

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